

## Stages and the Vermont Assessment Process

### OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances the Vermont assessment process because:

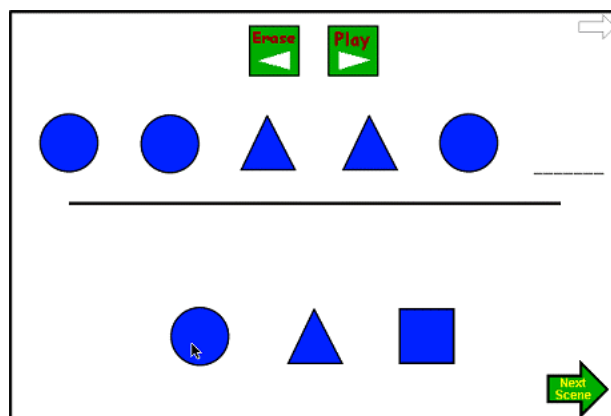
1. **Stages aligns with Vermont's Framework of Standards.**
2. **Stages generates evidence of learner skill achievement.**
3. **Stages Observation Forms increase the objectivity and efficiency of observations.**
4. **Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
5. **Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

#### 1. Stages aligns with Vermont's Framework of Standards.

Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to Vermont's Framework of Standards in reading, writing and mathematics areas. Instructors can use Stages activities to evaluate learners with disabilities between formal assessments to create a benchmark of the learner's progress. Please refer to the section, "How Stages Correlates with Vermont's Framework of Standards" for detailed matching.

#### 2. Stages generates evidence of learner skill achievement.

During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a learner-created product. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type/frequency, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The IEP team member may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file.



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. If a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid. Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement.

**3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include various community settings.

**4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables that help the instructor create an environment that corresponds with the motor skills of the learner.

## **SUMMARY**

Stages augments the Vermont alternative assessment cycle. Together, the Stages set of activities and recommended curriculum practice software provide a comprehensive benchmark tool. Stages activities are designed to assist the IEP team in documenting learner access to the general curriculum, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

# How Stages Correlates with Vermont's Framework of Standards<sup>1</sup>

## Communication Standards Reading

### Reading Strategies

1.1a Sounds, syllables, and letter patterns (e.g., phonological, phonic, and graphic knowledge).

#### **Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Four: Reading Readiness: Letter ID

Stage Five: Reading: Sounds (Rhyming)

- Stage Four *Letter ID* presents the learner with letters using simple animations. The learner identifies upper and lower case letters when presented with prompts.
- Stage Five *Sounds* plays and shows the learner simple rhyming sentence pairs with animated graphics. The learner is then asked to choose the rhyming words from a word wall.

1.1c Meaning in context.

#### **Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Five: Reading: Context (High-Frequency Words)

- Stage Five *Context* includes 'high frequency words' (*is, a, the, you, to, and, in, of, that, it*). The learner chooses the correct word to complete a sentence.

### Reading Comprehension

1.3a Comprehend grade-appropriate materials.

#### **Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Five: Reading: Meaning

- In Stage Five *Meaning*, the learner is asked to identify illustrations that show the meaning of a printed word displayed on the screen and spoken. The words are part of the Dolch sight word list at five levels: PrePrimer, Primer, First, Second, and Third Grades.

## Writing

### Writing Conventions

1.6a Use clear sentences, correct syntax, and grade-appropriate mechanics so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.

#### **Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Seven: Making Sentences: Building Sentences, Writing Sentences

- *Building Sentences* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of sentence structure without requiring typing skills. The activity is a collection of three levels of word walls with text-to-speech capability. *Writing Sentences* is another unstructured activity. The instructor can provide instructions or prompts for each sentence.

<sup>1</sup> Information from Vermont's Framework of Standards, Fall 2000. Source: <http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/pdfdoc/pubs/> Accessed September 17, 2002.

## Listening

### Critique

- 1.14a Observe;
- 1.14d Interpret;
- 1.14e Make connections.

#### ***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

Activities in every Stage provide the learner with opportunities to attend to spoken, written, or multisensory instructions. The observation forms at each Stage help the instructor record the learner's behavioral response to instructions.

## Expression

### Speaking

- 1.15a Share information.
- 1.15b Use accepted conventions of the English language (e.g., grammar, usage, word choice, [pronunciation]) in formal settings (e.g., class presentations, [job interviews]);
- 1.15c Show awareness of an audience by planning and adjusting to its reaction;

#### ***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Seven: Making Stories*

- Using the text-to-speech capability in this writing activity, learners can express a response to group discussion and play it for classmates to hear.

- 1.15f Constructively express preferences, feelings, and needs.

#### ***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Six: Stories: Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan*

*Stages Four, Five, Six, Seven: 'Explore' Activities*

- Given a choice of five stories, the learner uses an appropriate input device to independently select a story to read and/or hear.
- *Explore* activities give the learner opportunities to independently choose items on the screen to hear more information using an appropriate input device.

## Science, Mathematics, and Technology Standards

### Mathematical Understanding

#### Arithmetic, Number, and Operation Concepts

7.6a Add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers, with and without calculators.

#### ***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Five: Math:* Math Facts (+, -, x, ÷), Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷), Geometry

- Stage Five *Math Facts* activities include addition and subtraction with and without regrouping; and a number line to simplify answer input. *Word Problems* provides on-screen graphics to help the learner compute the answer for some problems. *Geometry* includes computation of perimeter, area and volume.

7.6b Begin to use simple concepts of negative numbers, [properties of numbers, three-digit and larger multipliers and divisors, rates,] fractions, decimals, [and percents].

7.6c Describe and compare quantities by using simple fractions and decimals, and whole numbers up to 1,000,000.

#### ***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Five: Math:* Fractions

*Problem Solving:* Number Guess

- The Stage Five *Fractions* activity includes parts of whole objects and parts of groups of objects. *Number Guess* asks the learner to deduce a mystery number by entering guesses according to feedback about its relative value, such as “That number is too high.” The range of numbers may be set for varying levels of difficulty by the instructor.

#### Geometric and Measurement Concepts

7.7b Examine, compare, and analyze real objects and abstract figures by one-, two-, [and/or three-] dimensional features (e.g., angles).

7.7c Identify, classify, and name geometric figures by specific attributes and properties (e.g., symmetry).

#### ***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Four: Shape ID*

*Stage Five: Problem Solving:* Mystery Shape

- *Shape ID* presents circles, triangles, squares, rectangles, and ovals in scenes and in isolation (photographs and drawings) for the learner to identify.
- Stage Five *Mystery Shape* applies the learner’s knowledge of shape attributes to a deductive reasoning game.

7.7d begin to use simple concepts of scale (constant ratio), using combinations of units (e.g., m.p.h.), and the relationships between area, perimeter, and volume.

#### ***Related Stages Assessment Activities:***

*Stage Five: Math:* Geometry

- Stage Five *Geometry* includes computation of perimeter, area and volume.

Function and Algebra Concepts

7.8a Extend patterns by identifying a rule that generates the pattern (*also: 7.7g Extend and create geometric patterns, concrete and pictorial models - Geometric and Measurement Concepts*).

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

- Stage Four *Patterns* activities introduce the learner to patterns using shapes, color, and sound, have them continue patterns, and allow them to generate their own patterns.

Statistics and Probability Concepts

7.9a [Collect, order, display and] analyze data in order to answer a question or test a hypothesis.

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Five: Math: Charts and Graphs

- The Stage Five *Charts and Graphs* activity includes bar graphs, line graphs, and pie charts. Familiar topics such as favorite snacks and animals help make the activities engaging for the learner.

## Mathematical Problem Solving and Reasoning

Applications

7.10a Solve problems by reasoning mathematically with concepts and skills expected in these grades.

7.10b Determine what the question, assignment, or problem is really asking them to do.

7.10d Make connections between concepts in order to solve problems.

**Related Stages Assessment Activities:**

Stage Five: Math: Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

- *Word Problems* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to determine important information for solving a problem and choose the correct operation to calculate the solution. Diagrams in some problems aid the learner in conceptualizing the problem.